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Training and research: United Nations Institute for Training and Research

Note by the Secretary-General

At the request of the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly a report approved by the Board of Trustees of the Institute, entitled "Completion of the restructuring of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 47/227".

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Annex

Completion of the restructuring of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research

Restructuring of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 47/227

1. The United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) has been restructured in compliance with the requirements of General Assembly resolution 47/227 of 8 April 1993. The new Board of Trustees appointed by the Secretary-General has guided the Executive Director through the process and has seen to it that the Institute has complied with the letter and spirit of the General Assembly resolution.

2. In particular, UNITAR has undergone the following changes:

(a) *Transfer of the headquarters from New York to Geneva.* The Institute moved its headquarters to Geneva during the autumn of 1993, without any significant cost to the United Nations. This was made possible by the fact that most of its activities were already conducted from Geneva. The activities carried out in New York were terminated and/or phased out by 1994;

(b) *Establishment of a liaison office in New York.* This requirement of the General Assembly was implemented in the autumn of 1996 after it was ensured by the Board of Trustees that the opening of the office was financially viable;

(c) *Operating with no financial assistance from the United Nations regular budget.* For the past five years, UNITAR has been able to continue its existing activities with no deficit and, more significantly, to expand its activities through earmarked voluntary contributions. It now operates exclusively on voluntary contributions and special purpose grants. Many requests for training and assistance from Member States have, however, had to be turned down owing to lack of funding or donor interest;

(d) *Downgrading of the post of Executive Director.* Despite the lack of an explicit statement to that effect in the General Assembly resolution, the post of Executive Director was reclassified from Under-Secretary-General to D-2 during the period of restructuring;

(e) *Downsizing and streamlining of staff.* The Institute has downsized its staff, mainly by terminating New York-based staff. In addition, it has reorganized its staff to become more directly operational and linked to funded programmes. All contracts are fixed-term and limited to UNITAR and directly linked to funding availability;

(f) *Phasing out of research functions not related to training.* The Institute transferred most of its research activities unrelated to its training activities to other appropriate United Nations bodies and phased out all pure research programmes. In addition, UNITAR transferred its library collection to the United Nations University at Tokyo. Currently, only research related to its training function is conducted, resulting in the publication of training and guidance materials. All UNITAR publications are now exclusively produced by UNITAR staff;

(g) *Closer cooperation within the United Nations system to respond to the increasing training needs in the most cost-effective manner.* This requirement has been a constant concern of Member States and appears under one form or another in every subsequent resolution of the General Assembly. The same applies to cooperation with relevant national, regional and international institutions. Under the constant supervision of the Board of Trustees, UNITAR has made great efforts to meet this request.

Results and shortcomings of the restructuring process

3. The Institute has advanced during the restructuring process and demonstrated its capacity to positively contribute in its field and to the achievement of the objectives of the United Nations. It now has a clearer vision of its role and potential within the United Nations system and the uncertainty over the future of UNITAR is now over. The relevance and purpose of UNITAR have largely been acknowledged by recipients and donors alike.

4. The main challenge it now faces is how to realize its maximum potential and the valuable contributions it can make to United Nations efforts to meet the opportunities in the twenty-first century. Two factors are relevant: (a) its fuller utilization by the United Nations system; and (b) assured core funding in order to realize its maximum potential.

United Nations Institute for Training and Research at present

5. About 4,000 people are trained in about 70 training events each year in five continents. The great majority of these training and capacity-building programmes are implemented in cooperation with substantive bodies of the United Nations and involve long-term capacity-building objectives. These programmes involve comprehensive human resources objectives and assist in building visible, measurable national or international capacities aimed at achieving internationally sanctioned goals. All of the Institute's programmes avoid one-off training and are aimed at enhancing the functions and performance of national and civil servants. On average, UNITAR programmes have been evolving over a period of five years. Its activities have continuity and are designed for follow up in order to ensure real and direct impact.

6. In identifying and designing its programmes, the Institute has been guided by the following principles and objectives:

(a) *Inter-institutional cooperation and networking.* All UNITAR training programmes are joint ventures with one or several agencies, within or outside the United Nations system. Programmes are designed to help to achieve the specific objectives of United Nations or international decisions and agreements. Equally important, UNITAR builds and facilitates operational networks of service and guidance providers in carrying out its programmes;

(b) *Avoiding duplication and building on existing resources.* Programmes presenting a risk of overlap or duplication are phased out or handed over to other institutions. Constant dialogue to avoid duplication with partner institutions and institutions with potential overlap is carried out before, during and after programmes are executed. More important, UNITAR continually assesses existing resources and capacities in both developing and industrialized countries and builds upon them.

(c) *Value-added.* The Institute aims to enter into fields only where it has been demonstrated that it can make a valuable contribution in a cost-efficient manner. Furthermore, UNITAR designs its programmes to maximize the benefits to developing countries. For example, as much as possible, resources and institutions in developing countries are employed and training activities are held in the developing regions at the country or subregional level. This approach allows UNITAR training to reach a greater number of people and assists in building the capacity of the institutions based in the developing regions;

(d) The Institute's programmes respond to the needs expressed by recipient countries and intergovernmental organizations.

7. Operationally, UNITAR has introduced approaches which have made it attractive to other institutions. These approaches are implemented across the Institute's programmes and have been tested in practice. Some of these may be of interest to other institutions and ought to be shared more systematically by UNITAR. Some of the key approaches are:

(a) *Stakeholder participation.* Most of the Institute's programmes are conceived and designed in collaboration with the recipients and donors with the goal of integrating the programme with the recipient's long-term objectives;

(b) *Programmes are implemented by national or regional actors.* Most of the Institute's programmes are animated by national or regional institutions. For example, training is conducted by national and regional experts and tasks are performed by national or regional teams;

(c) *Programmes are task or performance oriented.* Most of the Institute's programmes are aimed at improving the performance of national or regional actors;

(d) *Use of multiplying approaches.* The Institute uses training approaches which multiply the impact of training, for example, training of trainers, training development by national or regional training centres, sharing of training materials, distance learning and so forth. The Institute is also developing university-based certificate programmes which address more long-term, comprehensive training needs;

(e) *Rapid implementation by task forces.* The Institute's programmes are implemented following the managerial principle of avoiding heavy administrative structures, thus allowing task forces to act quickly;

(f) The Institute has introduced an innovative staff policy, relying on young, specialized staff. The average age of the present Professional staff is 35 years and the gender distribution is of particular note at the United Nations: 45 per cent of Professional staff are women, while two of the three senior officers at UNITAR are female also. The Board of Trustees has re-established a specific Recruitment and Promotions Board, composed of Trustees, and has decided on a merit-based staff promotion policy.

8. These approaches are designed to ensure that UNITAR programmes are cost-efficient and responsive. This is one reason why other institutions from developed and developing countries have contracted UNITAR to design and execute programmes.

9. While UNITAR has attracted special purpose grants, its general fund, which amounts to approximately US$ 1 million, is not sufficient to allow UNITAR to systematically develop new programmes, share its innovations and experience more effectively with other institutions, and participate more fully in crafting a more system-wide approach to capacity-building. The general fund is stretched to cover the direction and administrative management of UNITAR, the diplomacy training programmes at United Nations Headquarters, Geneva and, to a different extent, Vienna.

10. In recognition of this persistent and urgent problem, the Board of Trustees has launched a fund-raising campaign, since the voluntary contributions to the general fund guarantees the stability, autonomy, and sustainability of the Institute.

Reaffirming the purpose and role of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research in the United Nations system

11. The Institute can contribute to the efforts of the United Nations to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. It could and should be systematically utilized by the United Nations in the execution of its training programmes, particularly in Member States. While UNITAR cannot fulfil all training needs, it has developed expertise in the fields of international affairs and sustainable development, not only for the conduct of training but in the design and management of capacity-building programmes in general.

12. As an autonomous institute of the United Nations, UNITAR is administratively lean and able to execute tasks with relatively few bureaucratic delays. In addition, it has a neutral mandate which makes it an appropriate body to serve as a forum for networking common interests in the context of implementing international decisions.

13. The Institute is an effective, cost-efficient agent for executing training programmes in Member States for other United Nations bodies, such as the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Population Fund. The Institute is in a good position to provide the following services:

(a) The experiences gained and lessons learned through pilot testing of innovative approaches at the country level serve as the basis for the further development of training and capacity-building programmes and approaches, including the preparation of relevant guidance and training materials, to be used by implementing agencies in assisting interested countries in undertaking such approaches;

(b) Development of capacity-building programmes for the implementation of international agreements, conventions and decisions;

(c) Assessment of experiences gained in the context of country-based programmes, from the perspective of implementing agencies, as well as participating countries, in order to define ways in which to enhance the effectiveness of training and capacity-building programmes;

(d) Development of process-related guidance intended to assist countries in organizing a multi-stakeholder, national process towards the development and implementation of national action plans to address national objectives and/or undertake specific projects;

(e) Preparation of training and pedagogical materials, including self-standing training modules, train-the-trainer packages, curricula and teaching tools, in collaboration with intended target groups and relevant partner organizations at the international, regional and national levels;

(f) Establishment of linkages and networks with international and regional organizations and national institutes (e.g., research and public interest institutes) as a means of enhancing capacity-building and training activities through mutual support and collaboration.

14. In respect of the launching of the United Nations Staff College project by the Secretary-General, UNITAR will contribute to the undertaking, as appropriate. The College and UNITAR have largely different but complementary mandates. While most UNITAR programmes are aimed at civil servants and actors in Member States, the mandate of the College is primarily to provide training to United Nations staff. Discussions are already under way to explore the sharing of methodology and experience, as well as possible joint programming, where appropriate. Moreover, UNITAR is ready to share its experience and approaches in implementing its programmes with other programme managers of the United Nations.

Inter-agency cooperation within and outside the United Nations system

15. Since the commencement of the restructuring phase of UNITAR, decided upon by the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session, the General Assembly has called for strengthening cooperation with relevant national and

regional training institutions and for the development of collaborative links with organs and agencies within the United Nations and the United Nations system.

16. The Board of Trustees recommended that the catalysing role of the Institute, its networking capacity and its ability to mobilize much larger institutions should be better explained to Member States and potential donors. They requested the Executive Director to prepare a detailed overview report on this matter.

17. The Institute has prepared a rather comprehensive survey which includes:

(a) Cooperation with departments of the United Nations Secretariat (8 departments are listed);

(b) Cooperation with funds and programmes of the United Nations (7 programmes are listed, with a detailed description of activities);

(c) Cooperation with agencies within the United Nations system (10 agencies are listed, located at Geneva, Paris, Rome, Vienna and Washington, D.C.);

(d) Cooperation with regional and national, public and non-governmental organizations outside the United Nations system, a section which comprises several thousand names and addresses. A selection of training institutions over the five continents has been established.

Inter-agency cooperation is an ongoing and ever-increasing process. Some UNITAR training and capacity-building programmes have established project task forces which offer to the institutions and bodies concerned the possibility not only of participating in workshops and seminars but also of substantially contributing to the drafting of the programmes and the selection of priorities. The task forces not only facilitate cooperation but help to avoid duplication. In the medium term, each of the main programmes of UNITAR will have its own project task force. The results of the survey on inter-agency cooperation prepared upon request of the Board of Trustees can be found on the UNITAR Internet address, http://www.unitar.org.

Action proposed by the Board of Trustees

18. The Board of Trustees has already launched a fund-raising campaign to expand the core funding of UNITAR. It calls upon all Member States to contribute to the general fund of the Institute, in particular those industrialized Member States which have utilized UNITAR services.

19. The Institute should be systematically considered as a possible executing agent or partner by the agencies and bodies of the United Nations system, in particular the United Nations Development Programme. The Chairman of the Board and the Executive Director will take follow-up action with the heads of the funds and programmes.

20. The Institute has made considerable efforts during the past two years to better keep the Member States abreast of the developments of its training and capacity-building programmes. Reports are regularly sent to the Permanent Missions of Member States. The present note is not intended to merely distribute information but rather is aimed at being more proactive and oriented towards the future.

21. Information on UNITAR activities is now available in various reports and publications, as well as on the UNITAR Internet home page, http://www.unitar.org.

Appendix

Letter dated 10 September 1997 from the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research addressed to the Secretary-General

I enclose herewith the conclusions and recommendations of the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) at its special session, held at Geneva from 3 to 5 September 1997.

As usual, the session was very well attended. The Board again expressed its satisfaction with the manner in which the Institute had developed its programmes and with its sound administrative and financial management. The Board nevertheless instructed the Executive Director to provide it with specific documents showing a precise operational framework and a coherent line of action in the design and conduct of the various training and capacity-building programmes of UNITAR.

The Board analysed with great interest the document, prepared by the Executive Director upon its request, on inter-agency cooperation. Even in its present draft form, the document provides a good overview of the network established by UNITAR. Inter-agency cooperation, it was noticed, is an ongoing and ever-increasing process. There remains a long way to go, but some decisive steps have already been taken in the right direction by UNITAR. The Executive Director was requested to forward the document to your kind attention, as well as to the Chairman of the Joint Inspection Unit. For my part, I will endeavour to follow up on the matter in New York with the executive heads of United Nations funds and programmes, in particular the United Nations Development Programme.

The regular spring session of the Board of Trustees is dedicated to budgetary and financial issues. During this special autumn session, the Board nevertheless discussed the issue of fund-raising and offered guidance for a systematic fund-raising operation. The Institute is currently solvent, without any subsidy from the United Nations regular budget. Its limited means, however, hamper the Institute from answering several requests for training, including those received from diplomats accredited to the United Nations Office at Vienna. Moreover, these financial restrictions lead to a very high rate of refusal (sometimes more than 200 nominations are received for less than 20 fellowships available), which certainly proves wide interest in the programme but which may damage the image of UNITAR in the long term.

I have already communicated to you the wish of the Board of Trustees to see UNITAR contribute fully, in the field of training, to the important reform process of the United Nations. Building on the competence accumulated, UNITAR can better serve the Organization and its Member States. The Board discussed and approved a mission statement on the completion of the restructuring of UNITAR, for distribution to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. The means of distribution of this report is left to you to decide. The Trustees considered that the procedure followed for their most recent report was adequate, namely transmission through a note by the Secretary-General (A/50/539). In order to contribute to the Secretariat efforts to cut document costs, we drafted the report as succinctly as possible. You will find the English copy appended. The Executive Director was requested to send to your Executive Office a version in French, the second working language of UNITAR.

The Board considered replacing the Trustees who recently resigned and to enlarge its composition slightly while keeping in mind the necessity to remain a small and thus efficient body. The Executive Director was requested to approach potential Trustees from Argentina, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, the Netherlands and the Association of South-East Asian Nations region and submit names for your attention. In this respect and on behalf of the current Trustees, I wish to express our satisfaction at serving on the Board and our readiness to continue supporting UNITAR which is entering a process of consolidation and controlled growth. We are encouraged to do so, aware of your interest and support for training and research on training activities.

I am of course at your disposal to supply any additional information which you may deem useful.

(*Signed*) Ahmad **Kamal**
Chairman of the Board of Trustees